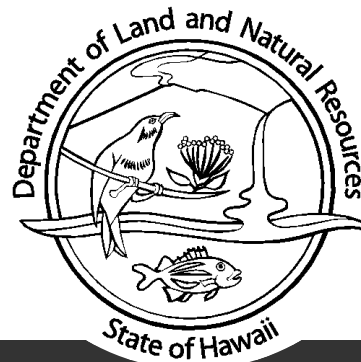


NEWS RELEASE

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WEST HAWAI'I REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT AREA NOW IN EFFECT

The Department of Land and Natural Resources announces that administrative rules establishing the West Hawai'i Regional Fishery Management Area, which includes 147 miles of the west coast of the island of Hawai'i, took effect Dec. 31, 1999, following signature by Governor Cayetano.

Within the West Hawai'i Fishery Management Area, the rules establish nine new "fish replenishment areas" (FRAs) along the Kona coastline. The new regulations prohibit the collecting of live aquarium fish, and the feeding of fish within the fish replenishment areas, which cover approximately 35 percent of the West Hawai'i shoreline, extending from 'Upolu Point (North Kohala) to Ka Lae (Ka'u). Maps of the fishery replenishment areas may be obtained by contacting DLNR Division of Aquatic Resources offices in Hilo or Kona at: 328-8041 or 887-6064.

"We recognize the need to balance the use of Kona's tropical reef fish resources both for those who want to look at fish and those who want to collect fish. We feel the rules will enable both kinds of activities to continue while still protecting the important marine life of the area," said Tim Johns, DLNR Chairperson.

Community concerns about the impacts of aquarium fish collecting in West Hawai'i have been voiced for more than 20 years, according to William Devick, administrator of DLNR's Division of Aquatic Resources. Following a town meeting in October 1995 to discuss the issue that was attended by over 230 people, DLNR formed a community working group to study the issue and make recommendations. That working group, consisting of community representatives including fish collectors, commercial and recreational divers and fishermen, met nine times over 15 months. Based on this group's recommendations and input from other community organizations, the 1998 Legislature passed Act 306, providing the framework and mandate for the West Hawai'i Fishery Management Area. Under this act, the West Hawai'i Fisheries Council was formed to enable the creation of a community-based, long-term management fishery program. A public hearing in April 1999, attended by over 980 persons, was held to receive final public input on the proposed management measures.

Establishment of the West Hawai'i Fisheries Management Area combines community input, monitoring and management flexibility to help sustain the ocean resources of Hawai'i. DLNR's Division of Aquatic Resources provides monitoring and management support.

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